

VZCZCXRO0578
PP RUEHAST
DE RUEHRA #0734 2551421
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 121421Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY RIGA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3320
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS RIGA 000734

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [EUN](#) [LG](#)

SUBJECT: POLICING HATE CRIMES - LATVIAN NGO HOSTS SEMINAR
FOR LATVIAN POLICE AND MEMBERS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

REF: A) RIGA 00602 B) RIGA 00575, C) RIGA 00533

¶1. Summary. On August 28, the Latvian Center for Human Rights (a local NGO) hosted a seminar titled Policing Hate Crime. Approximately 20 police officers and 20 representatives from the Latvian government and NGOs attended. The daylong event covered a range of issues, but the most valuable were: a) the dialogue the event initiated between members of the Latvian Police Force and minority communities; and (b) the presentations given by representatives from the Northern Ireland, Swedish, and Amsterdam police forces. In light of the disturbing events of July 22 (ref A) that attended the cancelled gay pride event and previously documented attacks based on race, closer links between the Latvian police and minority communities should improve communications links and possibly help prevent such events from occurring in the future. Post welcomes this independent initiative which dovetails nicely with our earlier initiative to provide training to police on dealing with racially motivated crimes. End Summary.

¶2. The Latvian Center for Human Rights (LCHR), a local NGO that promotes human rights and tolerance, hosted a Policing Hate Crime seminar on August 28. The LCHR organized this event as part of a three-year anti-discrimination capacity building project. The program was implemented in partnership with the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (a Dutch NGO) and funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Victims' Perspective: At the Receiving End of Hate Crime

¶3. The event covered a gamut of issues, but the morning session concluded with representatives from the Afro-Latvian Association (an NGO that advocates for people of African descent in Latvia) and from Mozaika (a Latvian gay rights organization) speaking at length about their experiences of being verbally or physically assaulted by skinheads and other hostile groups. This session became quite emotional, with representatives from both Afro-Lat and Mozaika expressing intense frustration that the Latvian police do not appear to take threats and crimes against minorities seriously. It is likely that this was the first time many of the policemen present were confronted directly by the concerns of these groups.

Policing Hate Crime

¶4. During the afternoon, representatives from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, the Swedish National Police Force, and the Amsterdam Police all provided comments and examples of how their forces communicate with minority communities and address hate crimes. In particular, the representative from Northern Ireland provided a detailed

presentation on reforms at his service that have helped reduce sectarian violence in his country. He then described his force's progressive minority outreach programs. This cop from Northern Ireland, who has lived and worked through years of extreme sectarian violence, spoke at length about the benefits of developing close links with both ethnic and gay communities. He stressed that once his police force developed such links, the police were able to solve more crimes--as members of these communities came forward with information.

15. Comment. This seminar served as a useful additional step in building police awareness of the significance of hate crimes. It also broadened very limited communications channels between the police and these minority communities in Latvia. While some of the police in attendance clearly looked uncomfortable, defensive, or bored, others were paying close attention--particularly to the comments made by the representatives from the Northern Ireland, Swedish, and Amsterdam police forces. Hearing real cops talk concretely about the utility of communications with minority communities, and how this has improved their capability to solve crimes likely had the most impact of the various activities at the seminar. End Comment

BAILEY